

Handbook of Organizational Justice

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*How Can Theories of Organizational
Justice Explain the Effects of Fairness?*

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Although organizational justice research has produced compelling evidence that employee perceptions of justice matter, there has been relatively less progress in understanding the psychological processes that underlie the effects of justice. This shortcoming presents obstacles to researchers trying to advance our understanding of organizational justice and to practitioners hoping to develop successful justice-based strategies for eliciting employee engagement in work organizations. This chapter directly addresses the issue of why employees react to their fairness perceptions by considering several major theoretical frameworks that help explain those reactions. The major propositions of these various theories are reviewed, evidence supporting each is discussed, and linkages between the theories are proposed. Overall, the goal of the chapter is to stimulate greater thinking among justice researchers about conceptual frameworks for why employees react to their fairness perceptions, and for predicting when, where, and for whom justice will matter most.

Employee perceptions of the fairness of their work organizations have a vital impact on their attitudes and behaviors in those organizations. The robust nature of the relationship between fairness and employee cooperation—and the extensive number of journal articles, book chapters, and volumes dedicated to highlighting it—has rendered this phenomenon self-evident to those who regularly follow the organizational research literature (see Conlon, Meyer, & Nowakowski, this volume; Moorman & Byrne, this volume; or Tyler & Blader, 2000, for reviews). This self-evident quality has been reinforced by supportive justice findings in the areas of law, politics, education and interpersonal relations (Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997; Tyler & Smith, 1997).

It is likely that readers of this current volume—a handbook of organizational justice—are intimately aware of the finding that justice matters, and that it (often) matters more than other types of employee evaluations, such as evaluations of the favorability of their pay and opportunities for promotion. Therefore, in this chapter we extend the discussion about justice from a focus on its importance to a consideration of theoretical frameworks that can help us better understand the impact of fairness on employee attitudes and behavior.

Clearly, the surge of research interest and activity in organizational (and, in particular, procedural) justice over the last 20 years is inextricably linked to the impact justice has on employee attitudes and behaviors, and to the possibilities it presents for shaping these attitudes and behaviors. Organizational justice research first addressed the "so

what?" question, and consequently the importance of studying justice in organizational settings has not faced serious or significant challenge. As might be expected, this starting point has also influenced the trajectory of subsequent research. Specifically, the traditional emphasis in organizational justice work has been on new demonstrations of the basic justice phenomena, with a significant amount of work dedicated to identifying new organizational variables linked to justice and various factors that moderate the link between justice and employee engagement.

We argue that this approach—although important—has detracted from a focus on more conceptual issues. That is, we claim that the phenomena-based roots of justice research have not encouraged the adequate development of comprehensive conceptual, theoretically driven frameworks. This neglect stymies the progress of justice research and the implementation of that research. In particular, it prevents justice researchers from being able to understand why employees react to justice. It also prevents them from predicting when, where, and for whom justice will matter most.

In this chapter, we go beyond the repeated recognition of the strength and resilience of the justice phenomenon and address *how* and *why* justice fosters cooperation in organizations. Our focus is on procedural justice, or evaluations of the fairness of organizational decision making and treatment of employees. We adopt a broad perspective on what procedural justice encompasses, and our use of the term subsumes both traditional definitions of procedural justice and the related concept of interactional justice (discussed as informational and interpersonal justice by some researchers; for a fuller discussion on the meaning of procedural justice, see Blader & Tyler, 2003a, 2003b). We emphasize procedural justice work because recent advances in the justice arena have primarily been focused on this class of justice effects (for more on this emphasis, see Tyler & Blader, 2003b). Where relevant, however, we also consider evaluations of the fairness of outcomes (pay, benefits, etc.), or distributive justice.

We review major justice theories and research in our effort to consider why (procedural) justice has such a potent impact on employee attitudes and behavior. We hope to make a contribution to justice research by bringing the discussion of these theories together and, where possible, by comparing and integrating them. By doing so, we hope to spur deeper thinking about the reasons that researchers detect an impact of employee perceptions of fairness and about the psychological underpinnings of these effects.

We often refer to the concept of employee cooperation. By *cooperation*, we refer to the various ways in which employees support (or, conversely,

undermine) their work organizations. Although cooperation can certainly include holding positive attitudes toward the organization and its authorities, our use of the term cooperation is primarily targeted toward a discussion of the various behaviors that employees may engage in that help their organization.

HOW DOES JUSTICE FOSTER COOPERATION IN ORGANIZATIONS?

As we noted in the introduction, justice research has been dominated by the goal of linking employees' justice perceptions to an ever-expanding range of employee attitudes and behaviors. This is not meant to imply, however, that no research has considered the psychological dynamics underlying these effects. Some significant strides have been made in developing an understanding of how justice fosters cooperation in groups, and in particular in the workplace. That said, relatively less work has been conducted on this question—as compared to work demonstrating the influence of justice on employees—and consensus among justice researchers about how justice fosters cooperation remains elusive.

We can reframe the issue of how justice fosters cooperation by posing the question: Why do employees care about fairness and why do they demonstrate such potent reactions to it? In other words, what are the thoughts and psychological drives that mediate the link between justice and cooperation? Various theories propose explanations for why people react so strongly to perceived justice. Each adopts a different viewpoint about why people care about justice—and/or how they evaluate justice—and thus each implicitly invokes different psychological concerns and drives to explain reactions to processes. We next review each of these theories. We note in advance, however, that although these theories all contribute to the discourse on why people care about fairness, they have not all been explicitly involved in efforts to link justice to cooperation. We adopt the perspective that the reasons that people care about fairness may mediate the link between justice and cooperation, and thus include in our review some theories that have not explicitly considered the issue of employee cooperation but from which we can infer a psychological dynamic that might explain that link.

Before reviewing these theories, it is important to stress that these multiple explanations for why people react to justice are not all necessarily mutually exclusive of one another. Some may be true under certain conditions, whereas others may be true under alternate conditions. Furthermore, even under the same set of circumstances, there may be multiple psychological motives at play, each of which makes a unique contribution to the link between justice and coopera-

tion. After we review each of the theories, we elaborate on the interrelationships among them. Consistent with the relative dearth of research on how and why justice fosters cooperation, little empirical work has worked toward an *integration* of these various theories. Because many of these theories are in relatively early stages of their development, most efforts have been focused on demonstrating their validity. Understandably, integration can only be accomplished once the validity of the models has been confirmed.

Instrumental Models of Justice

One important class of theories about why employees care about and react to their justice perceptions focuses on the resource- and exchange-based concerns that employees have in their relationships with their organizations. According to these theories, procedural justice is valued because it is part of the process by which employees garner valued outcomes from their work organizations. Although the theories differ in the role in which they place procedural justice in this process, common to them is the emphasis that people's reactions to procedural justice are linked to their desire to attain valued outcomes from the organization. The accrual of desirable outcomes, thus, is the primary underlying drive emphasized by these theories.

Control Model. The classic instrumental procedural justice theory is the seminal work by Thibaut and Walker (1975), which is regarded by many as the original effort that delineated the concept of procedural justice. According to Thibaut and Walker's (1975) control model of procedural justice, people regard procedures as fair to the extent that procedures allow them input into decision making processes (i.e., voice, termed *process control* by Thibaut and Walker). Because people ultimately lack complete control over the outcomes they receive from decision makers, Thibaut and Walker reasoned that people value process control because input provides them with the next best opportunity to influence the outcomes they receive. That is, in their theory input is valued because people do not ultimately have complete control over their outcomes; thus, input to the decision provides the next best alternative in their attempts to impact their outcomes. Procedural justice—embodied in the level of input that processes allow—is therefore valued because it is seen as instrumental to trying to achieve outcomes that are desirable. Thibaut and Walker conceptualized desirable outcomes as those that were perceived as distributively fair, thereby linking the two primary forms of justice.

Original development of the control model was primarily conducted in legal settings, where the concern was whether allowing input in court

proceedings affected people's willingness to accept judgments and decisions. Organizational contexts are a rather different domain, however, where the key concern is to understand employee behavior and less the issue of decision acceptance. Although linkages between process control and decision acceptance seem natural—because the link between input into decision making and decision acceptance is direct—it is less clear how the theory could be extended to understand employee cooperation (cf. Tyler, 1989). Although it is possible that input affects behavior through decision acceptance (i.e., that input increases decision acceptance—such as pay or promotion satisfaction—which in turn influences behavior), little research has made an attempt to empirically test this proposition.

Alternatively, procedural justice may foster cooperation because people infer that it is an antecedent of fair outcomes. In line with this suggestion, justice research typically shows strong correlations between procedural and distributive justice, and some work directly suggests that procedural fairness may be an important factor in distributive justice evaluations (Tornblom & Vermunt, 1999; Van den Bos, Lind, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997). This approach would suggest that outcome evaluations (specifically, evaluations of outcome fairness) mediate the effects of procedural justice on cooperation. Research is needed to directly test this mediational relationship (cf. Sweeney & McFarlin, 1993).

According to both of these potential explanations for how the control model might explain justice effects on cooperation, fair processes are valued because they are regarded as instrumental in achieving desired economic and material outcomes, typically defined as fair outcomes. The receipt of fair outcomes is therefore regarded as a fundamental goal, which may in and of itself lead to employee cooperation.

We can consider the insights of the control model through an organizational example. For instance, employees do not have complete control over whether they are promoted or over the amount of their raises. However, performance review processes that provide them with voice do permit them the opportunity to let decision makers know how they evaluate their own performance and provide them with a chance to make the case for the raise or promotion that they feel is just. Providing input into such organizational processes thus represents a way that employees can at least try to impact the outcomes they experience. However, this input should only impact cooperation to the extent that employees perceive the outcomes that are associated with the provision of voice and input as fair; research indicates that this pattern of results may not always be the case (e.g., Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990).

Social Exchange Theories. Social exchange theory represents another type of instrumental explanation for why people cooperate in

groups (Foa & Foa, 1974; Kelly & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996), and has been adopted in several recent studies to help understand the link between perceived procedural justice and cooperation (Croppanzano & Prehar, 2001; Konovsky & Pugh, 1994; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Moorman, Blakely, & Niehoff, 1998; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002). This approach argues that the impact of justice perceptions on employee cooperation is mediated by social exchange variables, such as leader-member exchange and perceived organizational support (e.g., Masterson et al., 2000). These social exchange variables emphasize the reciprocal obligations between two parties to a relationship; in the employment context, those parties can be the employee and their supervisor or the organization. According to these theories, the medium of the exchange can be, but need not necessarily be, economic in nature (for a discussion of this issue, see Montada, 1996; Tyler & Blader, 2000, p. 199). Regardless of the medium, social exchange theory focuses on the mutual give-and-take relationship that operates between the employee and either the supervisor or the organization. It emphasizes that that give-and-take represents the glue that binds the parties of the exchange together.

Social exchange explanations for justice effects adopt the view that employees regard fairness as a benefit deserving of reciprocation. Therefore, the experience of justice begets an obligation on the part of employees to reciprocate and thus fosters the development and maintenance of a social exchange relationship, with the expectation that such a relationship will lead to the exchange of valued benefits between the parties. Employee reciprocation for justice may take the form of positive attitudes or cooperation with the organization or one's supervisor. Employees will be hesitant to risk nonreciprocation of perceived fairness from the organization, because that may interrupt the cycle of exchanging valued benefits with the other party. Studies testing the social exchange approach demonstrate that the relationship between justice and cooperation is mediated by perceptions of the quality of the social exchange between the parties, and thus focus on the role that justice plays in determining the perceived quality of that exchange.

Social exchange theories share the perspective of the control model that people react to procedural justice because fairness is part of a process in which they accrue and maintain valued benefits. The control model regards procedural fairness as a factor in expectations or perceptions of desired outcomes, whereas the social exchange approach regards procedural justice as part of the exchange of benefits. Although the underlying dynamic postulated by each is rather different, both regard procedural justice as instrumental to employees garnering valued outcomes or benefits from their organizations. In both cases employees' reactions to their justice perceptions are rooted in their desire to gain re-

sources and other types of desired benefits. Further, social exchange theory makes the explicit link to cooperation and argues that cooperation is driven by the desire to maintain the reciprocal exchange of valued benefits between the parties.

Relational Models of Justice

A different research stream focuses on employees' reactions to procedures and the identity implications that process fairness evaluations have for how employees construe their social identities vis-à-vis their work organizations. This approach, originally developed in the group-value model (Lind & Tyler, 1998) and the relational model of authority (Tyler & Lind, 1992), has recently been extended into an integrative framework of how procedural justice fosters cooperation in groups (the "group engagement model"; Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2001, 2003a, 2003c). The relational models argue that important inferences about the self as a member of the work organization flow from employees' procedural justice judgments, and thus they emphasize the relational inferences and implications of process fairness perceptions. From this perspective, employees make evaluations about their identities as members of their work organization based on the procedural justice that they experience in that organization. Procedural fairness communicates a positive message about their membership, while procedural unfairness communicates a negative message. In either case, people are drawing conclusions about themselves as members of the organization based on their process fairness evaluations.

The primary insights of the group-value and relational models are that noninstrumental (and, in particular, relational) criteria will affect procedural justice judgments, and that procedural justice is closely linked to group-related identity concerns. The group engagement model extends this idea and directly argues that these justice-based social identity inferences mediate the impact of justice on employee cooperation (Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2003a, 2003c). In other words, the model establishes how justice can be linked to understanding the issue of employee cooperation. It does so by emphasizing that group-related identity judgments are shaped by perceived procedural justice, and that identity judgments in turn influence and determine employee cooperation. The group engagement model is presented in Fig. 11.1.

The group engagement model highlights three important identity-related variables that are linked to procedural justice (Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2003; Tyler, Degoey, & Smith, 1996; Tyler & Smith, 1999): perceptions of the status or standing of the group (pride), perceptions of one's status or standing within the group (respect), and the extent to which employees define themselves as members of the group (identifi-

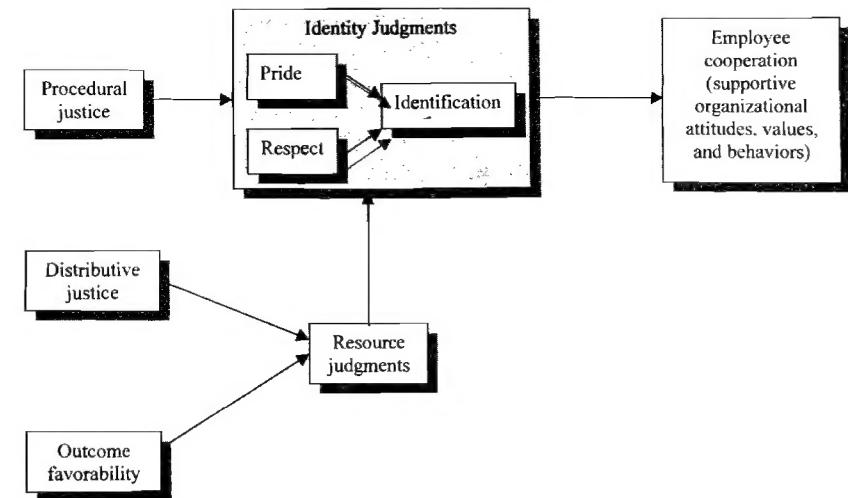


FIG. 11.1. The group engagement model.

cation—i.e., the extent to which they cognitively intermingle their concepts of themselves and their group). Pride and respect represent evaluative judgments, while identification embodies the extent to which cognitive representations of self and group overlap. Each of these identity judgments addresses an issue with regard to how employees think of themselves as members of their work organizations. Pride addresses the intergroup issue of the status or standing of the organization, and respect addresses the intragroup issue of whether employees feel included and respected by the organization. Identification represents the extent to which employees think of themselves as members of the organization.

When employees view their work organizations as operating and treating them in procedurally fair ways, they infer that the organization is one that they can be proud of (i.e., that has high status) and that they are respected members of the organization. When they view the organization as procedurally unfair, they evaluate their inter- and intraorganizational standing in negative terms. These two evaluations about the standing of the organization and their place in it, in turn, are hypothesized to influence their level of identification with the organization (Tyler & Blader, 2001, 2003). More specifically, positive evaluations about these two standing or status judgments will in part lead employees to be strongly identified with their work organization, be-

cause the organization presents an opportunity for them to develop a positive social identity. Negative evaluations about these two standing or status judgments are predicted to have the opposite effect on identification, leading the employee to a weak intermingling of the self and the organization.

Thus, procedural fairness is related to each of these identity-related judgments, insofar as perceived fairness is positively associated with greater perceived pride, respect, and ultimately identification with the organization. This suggests that employees care about justice because it is a cue that they use to make important relational evaluations. Employees look to procedural justice when they are evaluating their relationships with their work organizations, and they make positive inferences about those relationships when they see the organization's procedures as fair.

Of greatest relevance to the central question addressed in this chapter, the group engagement model argues that identity variables mediate the link between justice and cooperation (e.g., Tyler & Blader, 2000). That is, the potent influence that justice has on cooperation can primarily be accounted for by the implications of procedural justice on how employees construct their identities with regard to their work organizations. When they are highly identified with their work organization—and when they have pride in the organization and a sense that they are respected members of the organization—they become intrinsically motivated to see the organization succeed (Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2003b). They hold positive attitudes toward the organization and want to work on its behalf, because they care about it and because it is part of their self-concept. This framework emphasizes that procedural justice fosters cooperation in organizations by directly addressing employees' needs for affiliation and belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2000) and by leading them to determine that their need to develop and maintain a positive social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) will be satisfied through their association with the work organization.

In contrast to instrumental theories of justice, the group engagement model emphasizes that employees become intrinsically motivated to cooperate and work on the organization's behalf; they work for the organization's success because they want to, not for the personal benefits that may accrue from such cooperation. Once they are strongly identified with the organization, its success becomes tantamount to their own success, and they are internally motivated to cooperate. Thus, cooperation is not linked to the exchange of desired benefits or to the anticipation that the organization will be providing them with valued outcomes (material or otherwise) as a function of their cooperation. Although such outcomes may be associated with cooperation, according to the group engagement model they are not the

primary force driving cooperation and thus are not the primary motivational impetus to cooperation (cf. Batson, 1991). Employees may indeed receive valued benefits because of their cooperation, and they may even enjoy receiving those benefits. The point is that those benefits do not drive their behavior and do not determine their justice-based reactions; they are incidental to cooperation, not determinants of it. The group engagement model asserts that people do not engage in the calculus that social exchange processes presuppose. Instead, it has as its basis people's drive to affiliate with groups.

Relational justice models argue for a rather different understanding of what employees seek from their affiliations with their work organizations, as compared to instrumental models. They assert that a primary goal people have for joining and working on behalf of groups is to develop and maintain a positive identity, and to fulfill their affiliation and belongingness needs. Therefore employees focus on procedural justice—and not on other types of information—because it is directly linked to these identity and affiliation-related goals. Social exchange models provide a less direct explanation for why people focus on fairness information in particular, as opposed to one of the multitudes of other types of information available to them.

Fairness Heuristic Theory

Fairness heuristic theory (for reviews, see Lind, 2001; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002)—with the related uncertainty management model of justice (Van den Bos, 2001; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002)—is focused on exploring the cognitive processing of fairness information. The underlying premise of these theories is that group contexts are naturally imbued with uncertainty that people need to manage. That uncertainty relates to people's fear of exploitation by group authorities and to their fear of rejection (Lind, 2001), and thus group members search for signals in the environment about whether authorities can be trusted and whether they are included in the group. Integrating this perspective to organizational contexts, it can be argued that being an employee of a work organization is a risky undertaking, because employees face the possibility that organizational authorities will exploit and/or reject them. Consequently, they search for cues that can inform them whether they can safely associate themselves with the organization and its authorities. Procedural justice is regarded as one of these cues. That is, process fairness evaluations are a heuristic for determining whether organizational authorities can be trusted.

An impressive series of experimental studies supports many of the assertions of fairness heuristic theory (e.g., Van den Bos, Lind, Vermunt, &

Wilke, 1997; Van den Bos, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997; Van den Bos, Wilke, Lind, & Vermunt, 1998). This work demonstrates that procedural justice evaluations are most potent when other types of information are not available, confirming that process fairness may have important heuristic value. Additional work has directly linked process fairness to the concerns raised by uncertainty, by showing that the effects of procedural fairness are heightened when uncertainty concerns are brought to the foreground (Van den Bos, 2001; Van den Bos & Miedema, 2000).

What can we infer about how fairness fosters employee cooperation, based on the insights of fairness heuristic theory? Based on the theory, we can infer that fairness fosters cooperation by reassuring employees that they need not fear exploitation or rejection by the organization. With the alleviation of those fears, employees may feel free to approach their relationship with their organization in a less defensive manner (Lind, 2002). In other words, the sense of security that fairness fosters may lead employees to feel that their cooperation and prosocial behaviors on behalf of the organization are not open to exploitation. This pattern may be dependent, however, on what other types of information are available to employees (Van den Bos, Lind, & Wilke, 2001). That is, if other types of information are available that also provide reassurance about issues such as trust and rejection, then the theory would predict that we should see the influence of justice attenuated.

It is important to note that—unlike the instrumental theories and group engagement model outlined above—fairness heuristic theory does not explicitly test or indicate *why* people would choose to cooperate in reaction to justice. The theory's goal is to understand why people react to perceived justice, but not necessarily to explain why cooperation in particular emanates from justice. Thus, it does not focus on why (or how) cooperation would flow from fairness evaluations. It leaves open the question of why increased security in the nature of the employee/organization relationship should promote cooperation in particular.

Consistent with its emphasis, several realities of the research on fairness heuristic theory limit its current utility for understanding employee cooperation. First, research on fairness heuristic theory has primarily been experimental in nature, and relatively little work has tested the theory and its assumptions in field settings. Second, procedural justice is typically operationalized in these experiments as the provision of voice, to the relative neglect of many other characteristics and dimensions of procedural justice (Blader & Tyler, 2003a, 2003b; Colquitt, 2001; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002; Tyler, 1994). This limits the generalizability of the results to contexts such as work organizations, where procedural justice information is more varied and multi-faceted.

These limitations notwithstanding, fairness heuristic theory provides a valuable perspective into the issue of why justice matters. It highlights the predicament that employees find themselves in as they enter into relationships with organizations, and posits an important role for procedural justice in how employees negotiate that predicament. Although it does not directly address the issue of how justice fosters cooperation in groups, it does put forth an important proposition for why people care about fairness.

Fairness Theory

Another justice theory currently gaining increased prominence is fairness theory (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001), an update to these theorists' earlier work on referent cognitions theory (e.g., Folger, 1987). The primary emphasis in fairness theory is the explanation of what people mean when they say that an experience was fair or unfair. In other words, what are the factors that determine whether individuals perceive fairness or not?

Fairness theory differentiates itself from other justice theories insofar as it highlights the important role of accountability judgments. The theory emphasizes counterfactual thinking (Roesel, 1997) as a fundamental cognitive procedure in the evaluation of accountability and thus fairness. In particular, three types of counterfactual thoughts are emphasized: would judgments (has injury to one's state of being occurred?), could judgments (could a target person have behaved differently; was an alternative action feasible?), and should judgments (do particular referent standards suggest that things should have been different than they were?). All three elements are needed in order to evaluate an experience as unfair: People need to infer that injury has occurred, that it could have been prevented, and that it violated some moral or other standard that dictates what "should" have happened. When a person judges that injury *has* occurred, that the target causing the injury *could* have acted differently, and that according to some standard the target *should* have acted differently, injustice will be perceived.

Fairness theory makes an interesting contribution to the literature on how people evaluate fairness, because it brings to the foreground several facets of accountability, most of which have been lacking from previous work in this area. The contribution of the theory to understanding how or why justice influences cooperation, however, is less evident, because that was not the primary goal of the theory. Although fairness theory develops an elaborate model of the circumstances and preconditions that precede judgments of (un)fairness, it is less explicit on why and how these fairness judgments, once made, would result in cooperative behavior. Although some researchers have used its predic-

tions to examine outcomes other than fairness, such as customer satisfaction (Collie, Bradley, & Sparks, 2002), the model itself does not explicitly present a psychological rationale for why justice impacts cooperation in organizations.

Perhaps the foremost obstacle to fairness theory explaining the justice-cooperation relationship is that the processes highlighted by the theory tend to focus on the evaluation of unfairness, as opposed to fairness. That is, counterfactual thoughts are primarily generated in the face of aversive outcomes or situations (Roesel, 1997; Roesel & Hur, 1997; Roesel & Olson, 1996). Although it has been argued that fairness theory could be extended to positive events or conditions (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001, p. 47), research evidence on counterfactual thinking suggests that such an extension is not likely to be a robust one because counterfactual thoughts are not typically generated in reaction to positive events.

These restrictions to primarily negative events and evaluations of injustice present obvious limitations for the theory's applicability to cooperation. Negative events and evaluations of injustice may likely result in uncooperative, or retaliatory, behavior against the organization (e.g., Greenberg, 1990; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997), but are unlikely to contribute to our understanding of more positive, prosocial organizational behaviors.

Other Theories

Several other justice theories also address why people care about justice, and thus may also lend insight into how justice fosters cooperation in organizations. For instance, Folger (1998) proposed that people's concern about justice is linked to a basic human drive to respect human dignity and worth, termed the moral virtues model of justice (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001). Justice and fairness convey respect for human dignity, and thus people are drawn to it and motivated to react to it. The moral virtues model describes why people value justice, but one can imagine how it can be extended to help develop an understanding of the justice-cooperation link. For instance, if employees regard justice as a moral issue (i.e., as a "moral virtue"), they will be inclined to be a part of (and to work on behalf of) organizations that they see as respecting this moral imperative. Similarly, employees will want to disassociate themselves from (and thus not cooperate with) those organizations that do not demonstrate a concern for issues central to the their sense of morality. Thus, the moral virtues model can be adapted to explain the justice-cooperation link as a reaction to perceptions that the organization holds the same moral perspectives as the individual. Organizational research has shown that such perceived congruence be-

tween employees and their work organizations in related constructs, such as values, can be an important predictor of cooperation (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Tyler & Blader, 2003a). Of course, the moral virtues model may even more directly predict cooperative behavior in response to perceived fair treatment, because such fairness by the organization toward the employee is likely to fulfill that employee's drive to feel a sense of self-worth.

A different approach to the issue of why people react to procedural justice focuses on the role that procedural justice plays in causal attribution processes (e.g., Gilliland, 1994; Ployhart & Ryan, 1997; Schroth & Shah, 2000; Van den Bos, Bruins, Wilke, & Dronkert, 1999). This work, which can be labeled the "attributional model" of procedural justice, builds from the observation that fair procedures imply that the outcomes that are associated with procedure are deserved. In other words, fair procedures are tantamount to internal causal attributions (and unfair procedures tantamount to external causal attributions) for outcomes, because decision-making characteristics such as neutrality and attempts to be accurate tend to foster distributions that reflect people's inputs (and thus the outcomes received are reflections of each individual's input). Note that the attributional function of procedures is primarily in operation when equity is the distributive rule; when need or equality are the active distributive rules, the attributional function of procedures is not relevant. Because equity is the normative distribution rule in organizational settings, the attributional model of procedural justice has high relevance to our discussion of justice in organizations.

In a demonstration of this approach, Gilliland (1994) found that self-efficacy was higher among those receiving a negative outcome through an unfair process as compared to those receiving the same outcome through a fair process. Schroth and Shah (2000) found across three studies that self-esteem was negatively affected when negative outcomes were matched with fair procedures or when positive outcomes were matched with unfair procedures. Van den Bos and colleagues (1999) also found that the experience of negative outcomes spurs attributional processes, and that inferring fairness in such situations can have deleterious consequences. When people receive unfair or unfavorable outcomes, it may be more psychologically comforting for them to think that such negative outcomes were due to error, sloppiness, and even to group-level issues such as race, age, or gender prejudice (Major, Quinton, and McCoy, 2002), as opposed to thinking that they were due to something about themselves. These studies all show that procedural fairness inferences may be related to causal attributions for outcomes.

These results suggest that people react to procedural fairness because it is informative for understanding their role in the outcomes that they experience. Note the similarity between this approach and fairness theory,

which was reviewed earlier. Both involve assessments of responsibility for events or outcomes. However, the theories differ in their emphasis and in the phenomena they are attempting to explain. Fairness theory has as its goal understanding whether people perceive fairness or not. It focuses on judging how accountable target individuals are for (negative) shifts in one's state of well-being, and thus it is primarily relevant when outcomes are negative. In contrast, attributional models focus on issues of outcome deservedness. They address the implications of a given process fairness judgment on how people react to outcomes.

From the attributional perspective, two possibilities arise for how procedural justice may foster cooperation. First, people may value procedural fairness (and react to it) because it allows them to make self-serving causal attributions for their outcomes (i.e., internal attributions for positive outcomes, external attributions for negative outcomes). Such self-serving attributions may serve two important functions: (a) It satisfies their distributive justice motives, by allowing them to feel that positive outcomes are deserved and negative outcomes are undeserved, and (b) it operates in the service of their self-esteem, by allowing them to take credit for positive outcomes and to disassociate themselves from negative outcomes. Indeed, research shows that people may make procedural fairness judgments in self-serving ways, at least when information about the actual procedures used is sufficiently lacking (making self-serving attributions plausible) and when alternative motives do not interfere with outcome-based preferences (Blader, 2002).

The self-serving attribution function of procedures, however, would predict that outcomes interact with procedures in predicting cooperation, such that fair procedures would have to be matched with positive outcomes in order to elicit cooperation. Cooperation may result as people are motivated to continue to engage in behaviors that may perpetuate the receipt of positive outcomes, which they believe are internally caused. Fair procedures that are matched with negative outcomes would not satisfy the person's drive for self-serving attributions, and although unfair procedures matched with negative outcomes may preclude negative internal attributions, there is little basis to think that this would lead to cooperation. However, procedural justice research typically finds a different interaction effect between outcomes and procedures, whereby procedures have their largest impact when outcomes are negative (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). This suggests that this explanation for the attributional model of procedural justice cannot describe how justice fosters cooperation.

A second explanation may be that procedural fairness enables people to feel high levels of control (Langer, 1975; Rotter, 1966) since it suggests internal causality. Fulfilling people's need for control may satisfy a fun-

damental psychological drive that is unrelated to outcomes, and in turn may elicit cooperation because people value relationships with groups that allow them to satisfy that need. Importantly, control in this sense refers to a basic psychological drive and not to control over outcomes as described in the control model by Thibaut and Walker (1975). The provision of control itself can be motivating to employees, as has been shown in the research on empowerment.

INTEGRATING THE THEORIES

We have outlined several prominent theories about why people care about justice, and inferred from each some of the dynamics that may prompt justice evaluations to foster cooperation in organizations. They are the instrumental (control and social exchange) theories, the relational theories, fairness heuristic theory, fairness theory, the moral virtues model, and the attributional model of procedural justice. This begs the question, which one is right? As with all complex issues, there is no single answer to this question. The theories are not all mutually exclusive from one another, and furthermore multiple motives may be at work within the same judgmental context. With that in mind, we next consider some of the linkages among these theories, and discuss available evidence supporting one or another of the theories.

It is important to note up front that fairness heuristic theory, fairness theory, the moral virtues model, and the attributional model of justice do not explicitly link justice to cooperation. Although many of these theories propose an explanation for why people may care about perceived justice (or the factors they use to evaluate justice), they are less explicit about what drives the link between justice and cooperation in particular. We have attempted to derive some predictions for that relationship based on these theories, but feel compelled to add the caveat that many of these predictions were derived by us, not by the theorists themselves.

With that in mind, we observe that these theories are not necessarily incompatible with one another. Each theory posits a psychological reaction to justice that may coexist with the reactions posited by the other theories. In fact, in some cases the theories may complement one another. For instance, fairness theory's emphasis on accountability may make an important contribution to determining leaders' trustworthiness and their likelihood of exploiting group members. Finding leaders accountable for aversive actions should heighten group members' vigilance about the potential for exploitation, whereas lack of accountability may reduce the fear of exploitation even when outcomes are not desirable. So accountability judgments (the focus of fairness theory) may help address fears of exploitation and rejection (the focus of fairness heuristic theory),

which in turn may help group members feel the sense of security in their relationship with the organization that frees them up to cooperate. Other important linkages between attributional models of justice, fairness theory, and fairness heuristic theory may also exist, centered around their common focus on issues of causality and intention.

The explanations proposed by some of these theories for why people care about justice may also complement the identity effects of justice posited by the relational models. For instance, the reduction in fears of rejection (and exploitation) that result from perceived procedural fairness, posited by fairness heuristic theory, may allow employees to feel a sense of identity security (Tyler & Blader, 2003b). Identity security is the sense that identification with the group, and drawing one's sense of self from the group, can be pursued with little risk of negative psychological consequences. Identity security frees people up to reap the psychological benefits of group membership.

Similarly, a belief that one's organization shares one's value for human dignity and worth, which according to the moral virtues model is communicated by justice, may contribute to the sense that the organization is one from which people will want to draw their sense of self. Therefore, the moral virtues model may also be compatible with the relational theories, insofar as the perceived congruence in morality (or incongruence, as the case may be) between the employee and the organization may influence the extent to which employees are willing to let the organization define who they are and how they feel about themselves. That is, the level of congruence in moral values between the organization and the person may shape their level of identification with the organization, which in turn prompts cooperation and links the moral virtues and group engagement models. Other factors associated with process fairness, such as an increased sense of control (related to the attributional model), may likewise prompt increased identification with the organization, and in turn may prompt employee cooperation.

More generally, the point to emphasize is that the various reasons proposed by these theories for why people care about justice may be compatible with a relational understanding of justice effects (Tyler & Blader, 2000; Tyler & Huo, 2002). Each explanation provides a reasonable basis for employees wanting to define themselves as members of the organization and for seeing their intra- and interorganizational status in positive ways. Of course, future research is needed to empirically determine whether these theories actually fuse with relational and identity concerns to shape cooperation. Little work has been done to date on integrating these theories (although some recent work in this vein has begun to integrate fairness heuristic theory and the relational models; Van Prooijen, Van den Bos, & Wilke, 2004).

On the other hand, with the exception of fairness heuristic theory, it is harder to determine how these theories can be aligned with the instrumental justice theories. Moral evaluations are inherently distinct from outcome and exchange concerns, and thus employee reactions to justice as an intrinsic moral right are incompatible with cooperation that is linked to outcome evaluations. Likewise, people's need to feel a sense of control over their lives is regarded as a fundamental human drive. People do not only or primarily value a strong sense of control because of the positive implications it may have on their accrual of resources, but rather because feelings of autonomy fulfill a fundamental drive. On the other hand, reduced feelings of exploitation may be valued and reacted to because of the instrumental or economic benefits that come with not being exploited; employees may view resources more favorably if they believe that they are coming from authorities that are not exploitative. So to the extent that justice allays fears of exploitation, the insights of fairness heuristic theory may complement instrumental models of justice. In particular, fairness heuristic theory may contribute to an understanding of why procedural justice is regarded as instrumentally beneficial, insofar as it is a cue that conveys that organizational authorities will provide reasonable levels of resources and benefits. Additional research is needed to investigate this prediction.

Perhaps the strongest contrast between the theories lies in the distinction between the instrumental and relational models. Both models are supported by empirical research that specifically links justice to cooperation, and both explicitly posit different variables that should mediate the link between justice and cooperation. More fundamentally, though, the instrumental and relational models make very different arguments about what employees primarily care about and what motivates them. Instrumental theories argue that employees' essential concerns are over resources, whereas relational theories assert that employees' primary concerns relate to the construction and maintenance of their social identities.

In our research on the group engagement model (Tyler & Blader, 2000), we directly compare the relative impact of the instrumental and relational models, to determine which best accounts for the process by which justice influences cooperation. We have extensively reviewed our comparison of these models elsewhere (Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2001, 2003a, 2003c), but we will briefly review those results here. First, when we investigate the types of variables that procedural justice most strongly impacts, we find that process fairness evaluations are most strongly linked to the identity-related variables that we outlined earlier, and that they have a much weaker association with the types of outcome-oriented variables emphasized by the instrumental approaches. In other words, employees' perceptions of procedural justice have a

greater influence on their identities (e.g., on their identification with the organization and on their evaluations of inter- and intraorganization status) than they do on their evaluations of the outcomes they are receiving from the organization (e.g., outcome fairness, outcome favorability, expectations of future outcomes, etc.). Thus, when we compare the influence of procedural justice on instrumental and relational variables, we find that the influence on relational variables is greater. These relational evaluations are more strongly impacted by procedural justice than are the instrumental judgments.

Although this finding specifies the types of judgments most closely linked to procedural justice, it does not explain which ones lead justice to influence cooperation. Thus, we have also investigated which class of variables (instrumental, relational) are the strongest mediators of the link between justice and cooperation. We find that the relational variables account for the effects of procedural justice on cooperation, but that instrumental variables do not (Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2003). When we account for the influence of the relational variables on cooperation, we generally find little to no influence for the instrumental judgments. Furthermore, we find that relational variables fully explain the impact of procedural justice on cooperation, and that no independent influence of procedural fairness remains. Thus, research on our group engagement model directly indicates that the effects of justice on cooperation can be explained by the ideas of the relational theories of justice.

What do these results tell us about the importance of instrumental judgments? In our work, we find that instrumental judgments do have an impact on cooperation, but that that impact is mediated by relational concerns (Tyler & Blader, 2000). That is, instrumental judgments influence the identity constructs we have outlined here—identification, pride, and respect. To some extent, when employees regard their organizations as fulfilling their instrumental goals, they view their intra- and interorganization status more positively and they may more strongly identify with their organization. It is through this impact that instrumental judgments influence cooperation; no direct paths from instrumental judgments to cooperation remain when we account for relational judgments. It is in this way that the relational and instrumental models can be intermingled in an inclusive model of the justice-cooperation link.

Earlier, we cited a set of research theories and results that indicated that instrumental judgments, such as social exchange variables, mediate the link between justice and cooperation. Our results lead us to predict that these studies would have found a different pattern of results if they had included relational variables as well. Of course, additional work is needed to corroborate these emerging results. It is also important for future research to flesh out how the various explanations of why people care about procedural justice, such as those outlined here, can be

integrated with each other and with the relational and instrumental models. Such integration has the potential to foster more unified models of why people care about justice and how justice fosters cooperation in groups. These unified models are essential for designing the most effective justice-based strategies to gain employee cooperation in work organizations.

In addition to highlighting points of similarity and difference between the various justice theories, and positing ways in which they can be combined in a cohesive model of justice and cooperation, we hope to emphasize in this discussion the importance of addressing these issues from a theoretical perspective. We have tried to move beyond the mere observation of associated phenomena, and have focused the discussion on underlying psychological processes and dynamics. By doing so, we were able to identify those theories and explanations that are compatible and those that are incompatible. This approach facilitates the development of insights not just of justice but also more broadly of employee motivation. It brings the discussion of how justice fosters cooperation into the more extensive discourse on organizational behavior.

FRAMEWORKS FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF JUSTICE

Thus far, we purposely have avoided explicit reference to particular employee reactions to justice, referring instead to the concept of “employee cooperation.” Our vagueness on this issue reflects an intentional effort to defer addressing the specific types of reactions that have been linked to procedural justice, since the range and diversity of those dependent variables is so extensive and striking (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). Consistent with the phenomena-oriented approach by which procedural justice literature has developed, there have been few efforts at theoretically distinguishing the types of dependent variables associated with procedural justice. This shortcoming precludes theoretically based prediction of the variables that should be most strongly linked to procedural justice. Furthermore, it harms the credibility of procedural justice research, because it seems to imply the point of view that procedural justice is related to *every* employee attitude and behavior, while providing no insight into where or when justice should be most important. Finally, it neglects the important opportunity to test various hypotheses about how justice fosters cooperation, because different explanations for how justice fosters cooperation should predict different forms of cooperation that would be most strongly linked to justice.

A notable effort that addresses this issue is that by Conlon, Meyer, and Nowakowski (this volume), who distinguish between three different employee reactions to justice: performance and compliance (“the good”), withdrawal (“the bad”), and counterproductive behav-

ior ("the ugly"). We have also developed a different approach to organizing the components of cooperation, one that uses conceptual distinctions to identify the various forms of what Conlon, Meyer and Nowakowski refer to as "the good" (Tyler & Blader, 2000). Our model identifies two important dimensions for classifying the various behaviors that constitute "the good": the function of a behavior (i.e., the goal orientation of the behavior; is the behavior proactive in the way in which it promotes the success of the organization, or is the behavior one that limits the occurrence of negative consequences for the organization?) and the source or origin of the behavior (i.e., is it mandatory behavior that is stipulated by the organization [in-role behavior], or is it discretionary behavior that originates with the employee themselves [extra-role behavior]?).

Regardless of which model of cooperative behavior one adopts, the point to emphasize is that distinguishing the forms that cooperation may take fosters theoretically driven analysis and prediction of when and what justice will impact. For instance, within the issue of employee performance (i.e., "the good"), an important distinction exists between in-role and extra-role behavior (i.e., performance vs. citizenship behavior). Relational models of justice should be relatively more applicable to predicting extra-role behavior, because linking one's identity to their organization may make people especially committed to ensuring the success of the organization and thus to developing ways to help beyond those stipulated by the organization itself. On the other hand, instrumental models of justice may be relatively more applicable to predicting in-role behavior, because prescribed behaviors are more likely to be linked to organizational reward systems and are less reliant on intrinsic motivational forces that may be rooted in strong relational and identity bonds with the organization. Preliminary evidence from our own work (Tyler & Blader, 2003) confirms an especially strong influence of procedural justice on discretionary cooperation (cf. Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001).

Future research should investigate the role that relational and instrumental mediators play in this pattern of results, and more generally should explore how various models of why justice influences cooperation may be more or less relevant for different forms or aspects of cooperation. Such exploration increases the depth of our understanding of when and how justice fosters cooperation and provides a forum for testing theoretically based hypotheses that flow from the various justice models discussed in this chapter. Perhaps most importantly, the results of such an investigation further help refine the development and implementation of justice-based strategies to attaining employee cooperation.

CONCLUSION

The power and importance of justice findings speak for themselves: employees care about justice, and it shapes their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in groups and organizations. Our goal in this chapter is to delve deeper and encourage research on theoretical frameworks that help give meaning to these findings by identifying the processes by which justice fosters cooperation.

We have pursued this goal by reviewing justice research that may help shed light on this issue and by discussing commonalities and potential linkages between these various theories. In particular, our review highlights the value of relational and identity models of procedural justice (and our "group engagement model" [Tyler & Blader, 2000] in particular), because empirical research findings indicate that this approach provides the most compelling explanation for justice effects on cooperation. People use procedural justice as a key cue when making judgments about the identity implications of organizational rules and practices, and they react to their identity inferences through their level of cooperation with the organization.

More generally, we believe that the field of social justice in general, and organizational justice in particular, can be advanced by going beyond merely identifying justice effects and instead developing strong conceptual frameworks within which to study justice issues. Procedural justice has been brought to visibility by the many compelling and counterintuitive demonstrations that justice matters. What is needed in the future are theoretical frameworks to help us to better understand the motivations that lead people to react to procedural justice and the various forms that those reactions may take.

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